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Help Wanted In The CIA

Apologists for the Central Intelligence Agency insist warmly that no cloak-and-dagger outfit could possibly be so stupid and maladroitness as the CIA is painted. They also argue that the agency could not conceivably have committed all the blunders and enormities attributed to it since it came into existence after World War II. They argue finally moreover that since the CIA can't speak for itself, being ever so secret, it can't defend itself against calumnies and can't blow its own horn the way other federal bureaucracies do.

However, the picture thus conjured up of lean, stiff-lipped operatives suffering in silence the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune seems queerly out of keeping with the latest CIA mission. That mission is sending representatives to about 100 college campuses to recruit agents and analysts of both sexes.

What kind of sales-pitch can CIA recruiters make to graduates of Dartmouth and Rad-cliff? How can they tout job security or rapid promotion when one might get shot any time by a Chinese Communist agent, or by a CIA agent who mistakes one for a Chinese Communist agent? How can they tout the five-hour day enjoyed by so many federal employees when, as everybody knows, a CIA agent may have to spend 18 hours in a trench-coat under a heavy rain watching an Albanian agent in a Paris bistro, who in turn is watching a British agent disguised as a waiter, who in turn is watching a CIA agent disguised as an American tourist? How can the recruiters, finally, tout the social status that goes with CIA employment when one's family and friends are supposed to believe one is working as a

janitor in a burlesque house?

The answer to such questions is simplicity itself. The ingenious CIA has instructed recruiters to take the line that it wants high-IQ people, people with outstanding scholastic records. A man who calls himself Col. Stanley J. Grogan and declares he is an assistant to the director of the CIA (you can't be too careful in accepting these identifications) says that of approximately 600 "senior people" in the agency, 53 per cent hold graduate degrees — presumably earned before coming to the CIA — and many possess doctorates. "We try to get the very top people in academic standing," avers the man calling himself Col. Grogan. "We are particularly interested in those with advanced degrees."

While one shouldn't entirely dismiss the possibility that Grogan is actually an agent for the French Surete in a cover job who is trying to undermine the CIA by loading it down with specialists in comparative philology or Sanskrit, we're more inclined to think his sales methods support the identity he claims. There is a ring of authenticity in a CIA search for doubledomes to act as Lithuanian stevedores, B-girls in a Casbah dive, or Japanese acrobats, and to act as analysts at CIA headquarters for intelligence data received from itinerant Portuguese merchants in Trucial Oman. Anyhow, what the CIA obviously needs more than anything else are bodies (in conformance with Parkinson's Law) to fill jobs already available in its mammoth bureaucratic structure. And the job-holders might as well be doctors of law, science, or philosophy; the pay is too good for the likes of high school dropouts.